The Progressive Review

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The black budget

The Pentagon's secret budget now totals at least $35 million. This budget, used to fund new weapons, covert activities, conventional intelligence and planning for, yes, World War IV, is growing faster than any other major part of the federal government. It takes nearly as much money to fund it as the federal government spends on health care. It is bigger than the budget for education or transportation or agriculture or the environment. Just the military research & development portion of the so-called "black budget" requires more money than the entire State Department.

The disturbing details of the "black budget" were layed out in an excellent three-part series in the Philadelphia Inquirer by Tim Weiner (Feb 8-10) but has gotten little attention elsewhere. It is a story that raises questions not only of waste and questionable policy decisions but of huge sums of tax moneys being spent in absolute secrecy.

Says Weiner, the black budget funds nuclear bombers, the training of dolphins as underwater saboteurs, and plans for a World War IV complete with "robots stalking radioactive battlegrounds, satellites orchestrating nuclear attacks and generals speeding along interstates in lead-lined trucks, ordering warheads fired from faraway silos.

"The black budget also funds a host of secret weapons, covert miitary units, one-quarter of all military research and development and at least three-quarters of the US intelligence community's espionage and covert activities."

Weiner quotes a Pentagon missile expert as saying the military has three basic reasons for such a budget:

"One, you're doing something that should geuinely be secret. There's only a couple of them.

"Two, you're doing something so damn stupid, you don't want anybody to know about it.

"And three, you want to rip the moneybag open and get out a shovel, because there is no accountabilty, whatsoever. "

Saving the family farm

Senator Tom Harkin and Rep. Richard Gephardt have introduced legislation designed to increase the prices farmers receive while reducing taxpayer subsidies. Which is nice, except that times are so tough in rural America, according to the bill's major writer, Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower, that about 20% of the farmers who might benefit will be out of business before it could pass and another 25% are on "the brink of broke." Still, Hightower estimates that some 44,000 of the nation's 640,000 fulltime farmers could benefit immediately from the bill and another 120,000 could take advantage of the measure's debt restructuring provisions.

The act reestablishes a fair price floor at a cost-of-production level for several basic commodities. Says Hightower: "This floor will pump farm-saving income directly from the marketplace to thousands of family farmers, and it will produce either no increase or a very modest increase, in consumer prices (See chart)." The bill would also restore food stamps, child nutrition and commodity programs to their 1981 levels. This would cost about $1 billion, but the cut in farm subsidies would save $18 billion.

In addition, the bill would provide for debt restructuring. Hightower points out that "the debt owed by American farmers is a staggering $205 billion — more than the combined debts of Mexico and Brazil. Under current farm policy, at least one-fourth of that debt can not be repaid, precipitating either a massive

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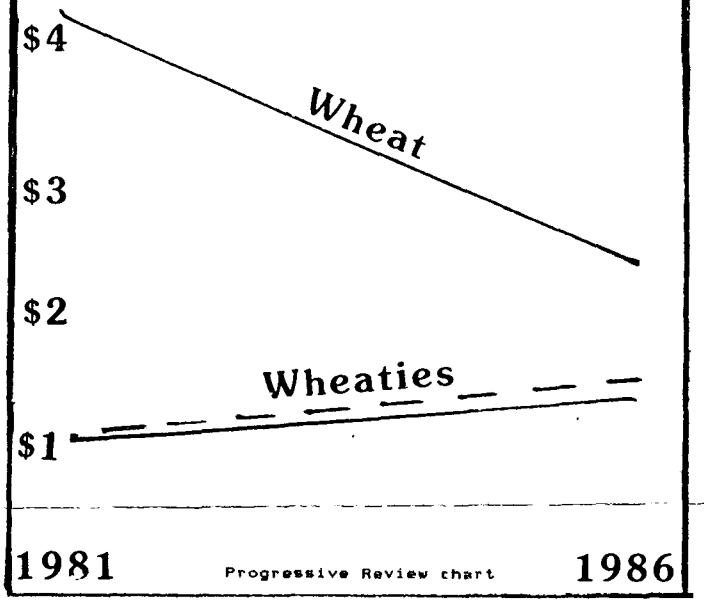
federal bailout of farm lenders or causing a default of crash proportions. Eating this debt, either by public or private institutions, will result in an estimated increase in consumer interest rates of two to 2.5 percent."

The only taxpayer outlays under the bill (other than for food-oriented social programs) would be for Food for Peace purchases, a conservation reserve and a disaster reserve. Info: Sen. Tom Harkin; Rep. Richard Gephardt; Texas Dept. of Agriculture, PO Box 12847, Austin, Texas 78711.

Wheat & Wheaties



This chart shows what has happened to the price of what a farmer gets for a bushel of wheat and what the consumer pays for a box of Wheaties between 1981 and 1986. During this period, wheat prices have dropped 42% — from $4.21 a bushel to $2.42. A box of Wheaties, meanwhile, has gone up 36% — from $1.04 to $1.41. The dotted line indicates what would happen to the cost of a box of Wheaties if the farmer were to receive 1981 prices for wheat and the cost was passed along by the cereal maker. It would mean 1.5 cents more per box. Source: Texas Dept. of Agriculture.

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FLOTSAM & JETSAM

Miss Brubach & James Polk

These are truly wondrous times. The Reaganistas are in disarray. Yuppie role models on Wall Street are going to jail. The Supreme Court has veered towards the center. The evangelists of America's latest great revival are killing each other instead of Commmies for Christ. And secular humanism has been declared a religion. All that remains is for traces of PCP to be found in the urine of a member of the Democratic Leadership Council.

It is too much to blame this all on chance. We are clearly on the cusp of a new era, as yet unamed by the op-editorialists, that will shape our lives and reading matter for years (or at least months) to come. Whatever new horrors it may bring, it promises at minimum a fool's vacation from the oppressiveness, pomposity, sanctimoniousness and tedious hypocracy through which we have passed these past six years.

David Broder has suggested that it is poo form to exult at the miseries of the White House. George Will, in an unusually candid revelation of his true political preferences, warns of damage to the "majesty" of the presidency. But frankly, news-watching hasn't been so much fun since they found Richard Nixon's microphone.

I particularly like thinking about secular humanism as a religion. The traditional liberals have seen the Alabama court decision as a blow against civil liberties, but I feel they are not looking far enough ahead. The potential is staggering: employers required to grant leave so Humanist Day can be properly observed, new court suits over whether Humanist tableaux may be displayed on government grounds, a Humanist prayer to begin sessions of the Senate, Humanist chaplains in the military, a Humanist Anti-Discrimination League, investigations into reports of crosses being painted on the walls of the offices of Psychology Today, Humanist hymns, a Humanist schism, perhaps even the election of Humanist popeperson, to be known as The Holy Mentor. Judge Hand could become the Martin Luther of late 20th century. And America will never be the same.

But, of course, that is what the

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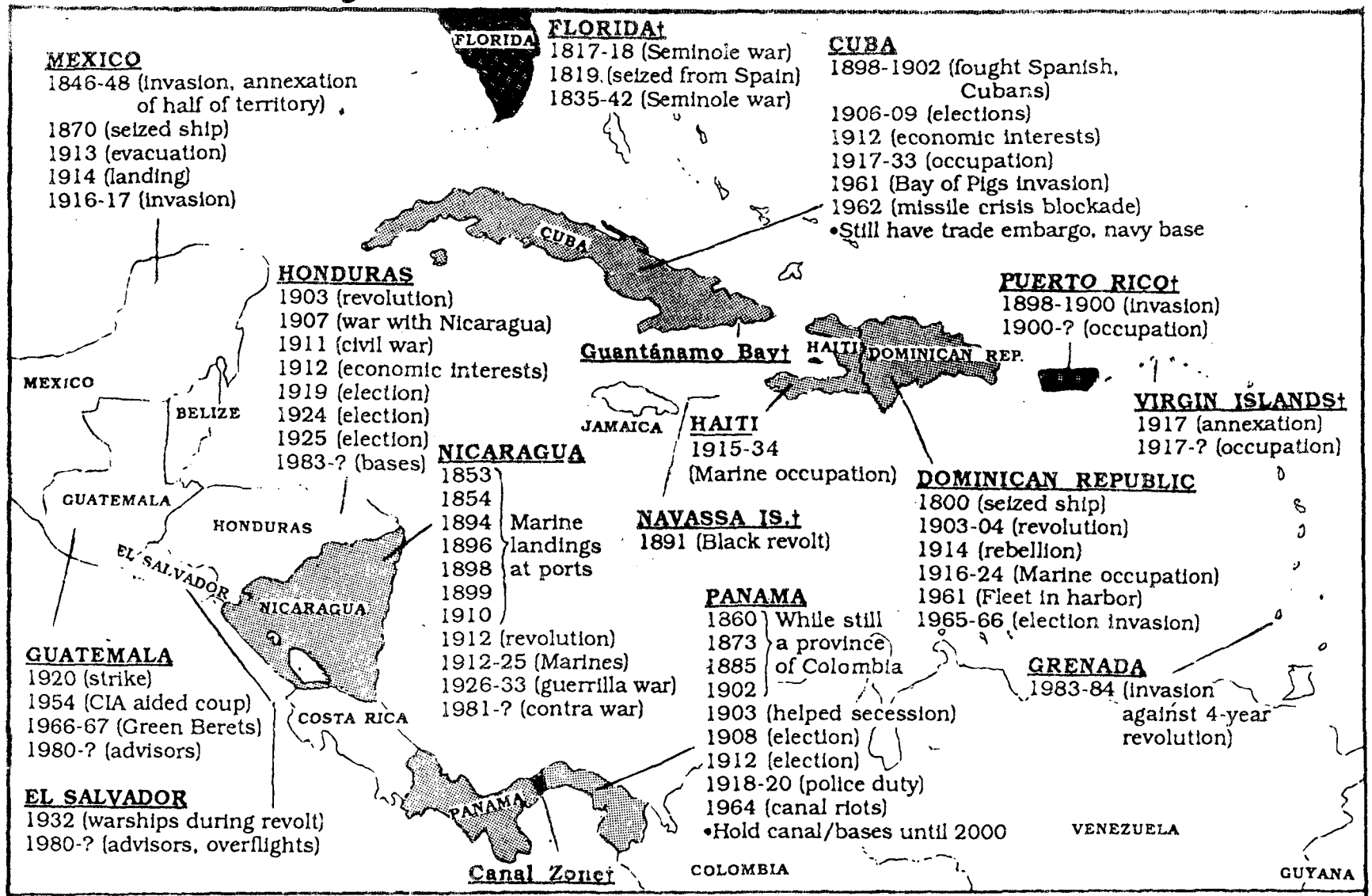
US Military Interventions in the Caribbean



MAP BY ZOLTAN GROSSMAN/*NORTHERN SUN NEWS*

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commentators were saying about the Reagan era until a few months ago. Yet at the double-witching hour of the Iran and Contra scandals, the Reagan market suddenly plummeted and the smart guys in town began looking for new bargains. This has been difficult as a certain disorientation overtakes the media and politicians when suddenly stripped of their market-tested cliches and assumptions.

The fact is that for the first time in years, it's unclear what's going to happen next. That even the evangelists and the Supreme Court should turn unpredictable is a sure sign that life has regained its normal random nature.

This is, as they say, a time of opportunity. Unfortunately, opportunity is worth little if one, in the manner of the Democratic Party, has not in any way prepared for it. The real danger before us is that expressed in the Spanish proverb: he loses all who loses the right moment.

The powers in the Democratic Party have assumed that the way to get to the White House was to engage in a sort of civilized Reaganism. They have proposed miserliness without the obvious intent of greed, social Darwinianism without apparent brutality, polite puritanism in place of Comstockery, and military aggressiveness without paranoia. In essence, their model is not anything to be found in Democratic precedent, but a resurrection of blue stocking Republicanism.

It is in keeping with such a strategy that the chair of the Democratic Party, Paul Kirk, blames low voter turnout on negative television advertising rather than on the failure of either party to make registration simpler or to give people solid political, economic and social reasons to go out and vote. The Democratic problem is far greater than a matter of deportment.

One could cite, for example, the current crop of presidential candidates who are traveling through the nation like the 1980s version of aluminum siding salesmen, trying to sell people something they don't need at for too much money. One of these tin men could well turn up as our next president. Does that inspire one to go to the polls? As the bumper sticker says: Don't vote; it only encourages them.

The only exception amongst the Democrats so far is Jesse Jackson. Jackson may confound the experts this time by his appeal to non-black voters. But it is really not so surprising. At the moment he appears to be the only true Democrat in the race.

Under such circumstances, many can, with some justification feel that apathy is the last refuge of the decent Democrat. It may, however, help one's psyche, if not one's country, to engage in a little revisionist thinking about what a president is.

Over the course of American history, only a few presidents have been counted in any serious fashion as important leaders. I discovered this early in life when I learned the parlor trick of reciting names of the presidents in order. The wonder was not that I could remember a list of names but that I could remember a list of such insignificant ones.

Nonetheless, while we are taught about only a handful of these men, we are also taught, by Miss Brubach and her peers, the importance of the presidency. Consequently, we go through life with this bifurcated view: extreme reverence for the office and total indifference to James Polk.

I would argue that the macropolitical

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ANYTHING YOU SAY, HOWARD ~
-TULI

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assumptions of Miss Brubach were simply wrong, that the key thing is to count the James Polks, and that part of the brilliance of the American system is that it functions quite well in the hands of the mediocre.

Further, we should take more note of the fact that an inordinate number of our so-called "great" presidents gained this status in part by engaging in military conflicts which had the effect of eliminating admirers and potential offspring of same in alarming numbers.

Consider our recent history. Below is a list of presidents generally considered strong and those considered not so. I have left out Kennedy because he starts too many arguments. Anyway, the point is made without him:

Strong Presidents	Weak Presidents
Johnson	Eisenhower
Nixon	Ford
Reagan	Carter

Now, take one from column A and one from column B. Which one's term ended in disgrace, dishonor or under a cloud? Which one had a tenure that raised serious constitutional questions? During which one's term did the editorialists most often use the word "crisis?" Which one bored us to death but left us with at least the comfort that the place wasn't going to be too mucked up? And which one has historians looking more kindly upon him as time passes?

In truth, describing these men as weak or strong gets us little closer to the truth. It might be better to use terms such as authoritarian vs. mediating, corporate vs. political, quasi-monarchal vs. semi-democratic, or meglomaniacal vs. human. But whatever terms we use, the point is that the very president we think we want is the one who is most likely to get us into trouble. The quandry of American presidential politics is that the Republic finds the most trouble when its people find a leader.

Which is not to say that we should revert to the system used in ancient Florence and pick our president by lot or to suggest that none of the Democratic tin men is better than the others. It is simply to argue that in choosing amongst them, if that is what we are left to do, our standards should reflect empirical principles rather than the lofty ideals of Miss Brubach.

For example, which of the lot might be tempted by the power and glory to emulate those presidents listed in column A? Which understand and appreciate the role of the legislature in a democracy? Which can hear, assess and absorb the pressures for change within America? Which will consult and which will dictate?

It ain't much, to be sure. But this is not a buyer's market. In the end, the best politics may be to lose with Jesse Jackson. But if you are checking out the tin men, forget what Miss Brubach told you and look for someone who will at the critical moments drop his shtick, and listen to what the country and other politicians are saying. — **Sam Smith**

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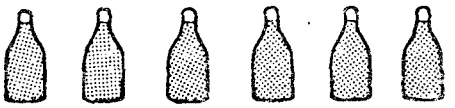

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MR. GANDHI: I THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA!

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The weather report

As of the end of last year, 14.6 million Americans lived in jurisdictions that have declared themselves nuclear free zones. That's up from 92,000 five years ago... San Francisco has cleared for the ballot an initiative that would ban local government from spending any public funds to "lobby for, encourage, attract or subsidize nuclear or possibly nuclear military installations"... The University of California, bowing to public pressure, has announced plans to close its 20-year-old nuclear reactor on the Berkeley campus.

• A California judge granted a preliminary injunction against the NCAA's drug testing program upon the petition of a Stanford diver who refused to take urine tests before a meet. Judge Peter Stone agreed that the tests are an obtrusive, unreasonable and unconstitutional invasion of privacy... Meanwhile, a Tennessee legislator has introduced a bill that would required anyone who wants to attend one of the state's colleges to be tested for drug use.

• While the President's popularity has dropped since the Iran-Contra scandal broke, so, apparently, has that of the White House press. Writing in the Washington Journalism Review, Ira Allen reports that the press room gang has been receiving unprecedented quantities of mail: "Almost all of it is negative, much of it scatological and little of it constructive." One letter was addressed simply "Sharks, White House Press Room, Washington, DC."

• Jack Fitch, who runs Civilian Congress (2361 Mission Street #238, San Francisco CA 94110), sends back our list of ADA's top rated members of Congress with a bunch of the names circled in red. These are people who hold down two federal offices — one in Congress and one in the military reserves, in violation of Article I, Section 6 of the Constitution. Among the circled: Hart, Inouye, Harkin, Matsunga, Moynihan, Mathias, Pell and House Speaker Jim Wright. Fitch is on to something, judging by Congress's bipartisan lack of oversight of the military.

• Despite all the free condoms being passed out, some college medical authorities are concerned by what they seen as a sign of failure of AIDS education programs: lack of reduction in the incidence of other sexually transmitted diseases.

• Mother Jones reports that the US Army has some 400,000 tons of out-of-date nerve gas and is facing what is probably the largest hazardous chemical waste disposal problem ever. There are tons of nerve gas in the stockpiles of 14 other countries as well.

Apple pie

• Overall winner of Stanford's first-ever rubber rating contest, in which seven brands and 6300 prophylactics were tested, was the Gold Circle Condom. Winner in the most categories was Fuji Latex, which won top honors for best feel, best taste and best looking. Rough Rider was voted biggest turn-on, Ramses best lubricated, Tahiti best fit, and Prime strongest.

• If you fail to get as excited as the ad agencies when a newly merged corporation changes its name, don't feel badly. The whole exercise may be as meaningless as it appears to the lay eye and ear. As evidence, we submit a draft news release inadvertently distributed by United Virginia Bankshares, which read in part:

"United Virginia Bankshares announced today that it will ask its shareholders to approve a change in the corporation's name to (name)... (Name) combines wth word (word) which connotes momentum or forward movement, with (word) which implies excellent performance. Clearly, (name) signifies everything that is good about our organization... (Name) symbolizes our ever growing strength as a corporation... "

The new name: Crestar Financial Corporation.

• The St. Petersburg Times reports that the Duval County school board has approved a voluntary sex education course, but ordered that glue stickers cover sections of the text dealing with homosexuality, abortion and masturbation.

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Things to read

The New State of the World Atlas (Simon & Shuster, 10.95). Unlike a conventional atlas, this valuable guide gives visual form to military power, food resources, money, unemployment and many other key issues around the world.

The Whole Again Resource Guide (SourceNet, PO Box 6767, Santa Barbara, CA 93160. $24.95). An annotated listing of over 3200 alternative and New Age periodicals and books. A remarkably complete guide to alternative literature.

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Rating America's Corporate Conscience (Addison-Wesley, $14.95): A useful and revealing guide to the social practices of many of America's largest corporations. Well-designed with charts that let you see at a glance how these corporations rate on charitable and PAC contributions, affirmative action, involvement in South Africa and defence and other issues. If the authors find a company of choice for a particular product (like toothpaste — they recommend Crest or Gleem), it is indicated.

SET FREE: The newsletter against TV published by the Society for the Eradication of TV, Box 1124, Albq., NM 87103.

What's happening

Green National Conference: Being planned by the Committees of Correspondence for July 2-7 at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass. Tentative subjects include Green movements around the world, roots of the Green movement, the Greens and electoral politics, Green economics and building the Green movement in America. Some 30 workshops are being planned as well, along with a Green alternatives fair. Writes one of the organizers, "we want to create a gathering that has more of the spirit of the old Populist encampments than the typical contemporary conference where spectators passively consume a series of lectures." Info: David Haenke, Box 3, Brixey, Mo 65618 or Howard Hawkins, PO Box 1342, White River Junction, Vt. 05001.

The Other Economic Summit: Plans are underway to hold an alternative people-oriented conference during the economic summit in North America in 1988. As has occurred at previous economic summits, this "Other Economic Summit" would bring out the many failures of modern economic theories and practices. Among the issues to be researched and discussed are

- National accounting procedures that consider nonrenewable natural resources as income for GNPs rather than costs.
- Current economic policies that are intended to create a surplus for social use (e.g. improving health) but in fact reduce social well being (e.g. health).
- Emphasis on the gross **national** product at the expense of **local** economies.
- The fact that small businesses create both more employment and more inventions than do large enterprises.
- The current definition of work that downgrades self-employment and the informal sector.
- Foreign aid being used to get rid of surpluses from industrial countries instead of stimulating self-reliance in the less developed countries.

Economists and others interested in preparing or and/or participating in TOEs '88 can contact Tranet, PO Box 567, Rangeley, Me 04970 (207-864-2252). Tranet would like to hear of any relevant work being done on these issues.

National Coalition of IRS Whistleblowers: Current projects include pressing for a taxpayer's bill of rights attacking such abuses as:

- The use of hit lists targetting certain businesses and individuals holding certain beliefs.
- Excessive computerised dossiers on taxpayers containing non tax related materials.
- Breaches of agreement and faith by the IRS.

Info: PO Box 7750 NYC NY 10116 (202-546-5345)

Mobilization for Justice and Peace: Rally, march, lobbying in Wasington on April 25-27 by students from around the country. Info: Mobilization Headquarters, 712 G St SE, DC 20003 (202-547-0061).

National Referendum to End the War: Several national organizations have joined to launch a national referendum on the war in Central America, using local balloting in cities across the country. The referendum would call on the administration and Congress to end all aid to the Contras; end military assistance to El Salvador and Guatemala; remove all US bases, military aid and troops from Honduras; promote peaceful solutions to area conflicts by

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supporting the Contadora efforts; establish cooperative relations with Nicaragua and promote negotiations within Guatemala and El Salvador. The referendum is sponsored by, among others, the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy, SANE, and the Religious Task Force on Central America. Info: 1314 14th St. NW, DC 20005 (202-265-0903).

Summer Ecology Program: The thirteenth summer semester of the Institute for Social Ecology with seminars on sustainable communities, ecology and community, and sense of self/sense of place. Also a master's degree program in social ecology. Info: ISE, Box 384, Rochester VT 05767.

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